

Thanksgiving Giveaway Feeds Stamford Neighborhood

By Nora Naughton

STAMFORD — A long line wrapped around the parking lot at Inspirica's Woodland campus in the South End early Tuesday morning, as the people waited for the nonprofit's annual Thanksgiving giveaway.

"It's cold, but it's worth it to wait," said [Ray Guzman](#), who lives on Pacific Street in the South End. "I'm taking this food back to feed my family — a wife, three children and two granddaughters."



Guzman, 62, has lived in the South End for 47 years. He started coming to Inspirica's Thanksgiving giveaway four years ago.

"It's a good thing that they do," he said.

Inspirica, Fairfield County's largest homeless shelter, was ready Tuesday with 800 turkeys and as many bags full of canned goods and side dishes. The nonprofit transforms its South End campus into a Thanksgiving dinner assembly line every year to provide its neighborhood with all the ingredients for a happy holiday.

"We want our neighbors to have a good Thanksgiving," Inspirica spokeswoman [Lauren Dubinsky](#) said. "We don't even advertise this other than putting a sign out front, and every year the line gets longer. That shows you how tightly-knit the community is down here."

Team effort

The Stamford nonprofit runs the event with help from the [Food Bank](#) of Lower Fairfield County and plenty of local volunteers to hand out food, direct traffic and keep spirits high.

[Stephanie Lombardo](#), 22, was a first-time volunteer on Tuesday. She passed out food bags and was one of 25 volunteers from NBC's [Stamford Media Center](#), which has been helping Inspirica with the turkey giveaway since it arrived in the city eight years ago.

"It's really busy, but it's good to help out and really rewarding," Lombardo said.

Continued on next page . . .

Christian Iannucci, of Doorbell Barbers in Stamford, directed the turkey handout outside the shelter. He spends a lot of time at Inspirica, giving free haircuts to most of the children.

"We just gave all of the kids complimentary haircuts for Thanksgiving," he said. "We've been doing (the turkey giveaway) for three years now. ... Today, we have five of our barbers helping out."

At the end of the giveaway line, 17-year-old [Emma Tregellas](#), of New Canaan, set up her [Cocoa Committee](#) booth.

The Cocoa Committee, comprised of Kids Helping Kids volunteers like Tregellas, returns to Inspirica's Thanksgiving event every year to hand out hot chocolate and homemade pumpkin bread.

Tregella was inspired to set up the Cocoa Committee four years ago because she wanted to interact with the people who benefit from the homemade pumpkin bread that Kids Helping Kids whips up every holiday season.

"One year I just thought, 'We have all of these breads and out here people are waiting in the freezing cold. Let's go there and put a smile on their faces,'" she said. "The interactions I have with the people here every year keeps me coming back."

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